

1999

# Legislative Update

Report to the 21st District from

**Senator Paull Shin**



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## **Dear Friends,**

As we reach the midpoint of the 1999 legislative session, I want to take this opportunity to update you on some of the issues we face here in Olympia. Our primary task this year is to hammer out a budget that addresses the needs of Washingtonians in a fiscally responsible manner.

We have some great opportunities to pass laws that will have a direct, positive effect on the lives of people in this state. These laws will make our schools better, improve our roads and ferries, and help create jobs.

As a legislator, one always has to make decisions: Do I support this bill? How much will it cost? What are the benefits? How will it affect my constituents? I always do my best to represent you, but your feedback is an essential part of the process.

If you feel strongly about proposed legislation, please take the time to contact my office. I'm always receptive to your thoughts and comments.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature of Senator Paull Shin in cursive.

Senator Paull Shin

## **Education**

**W**e live in the most affluent country in the most prosperous time in the history of the world. But our education system doesn't always reflect that. Tests comparing American middle and high school students with their counterparts around the world clearly show that our children are falling behind. Washingtonians know that we

can do better, and have chosen education as their #1 concern in poll after poll.

Having taught at various universities and Shoreline Community College for a total of 31 years, it's my #1 concern, too. I believe the best way to ensure that every child gets a top-notch education is to move toward a more results-oriented system based on accountability. We must demand more from all the players in the education

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## Education *(Continued)*

system, and we must dedicate significant resources to demonstrate the importance of good schools. Here in the Senate, these are some of the issues we're focusing on:

- **Smaller Classes:** Children learn best in smaller settings where they can get the individual attention necessary to reach their academic potential. The Legislature must continue efforts to provide teachers with resources to create a quality learning environment for each child. Washington has the fourth-largest class sizes in the nation, an embarrassment for a progressive state like ours. While a dramatic reduction in the student/teacher ratio is not possible due to funding constraints, we must make smaller class sizes a priority. I've co-sponsored a bill to reduce class sizes in grades 4 and 5 to match the lower levels of K-3.
- **Access for Everyone:** I believe in affordable education for anyone who wants it. That means giving children from disadvantaged backgrounds the same opportunities as everyone else. It also means providing extra help for students who fall behind.

I support bills before the Senate that would help low-income Washingtonians to attend college, help children from the state's foster care system to pursue a higher education, and establish a summer school program for middle school students to brush up on basic skills. Our children are our future, and an investment in education is a wise use of our money.

- **Excellent Teachers:** It's very simple: Dedicated, well-qualified teachers are the foundation of excellent schools. Teachers must be fairly compensated and provided enough time for professional planning, growth, and development. We want to attract our brightest and most creative college graduates to the profession, and we want to ensure that excellent teachers already in the classroom stay there. The problem, of course, is how to pay for it. We need to find a middle ground for pay raises. We have limited resources, but we should pay teachers as much as possible to show them how valuable they are to our society.
- **Safe Schools:** Recent violent incidents at schools across the country have raised the public's awareness about

school safety issues. We need to make improvements in the ways schools prevent violence and respond to crises. All schools need to have a crisis plan, and school staff and public officials must know how to implement it in the event of an emergency. We're working on legislation to make sure these plans are in place. I also support a bill that would help schools strengthen their ability to deal with disruptive and violent people on school grounds. Our children can't learn if they are in fear.

- **Accountability:** An important part of making our schools more competitive is accountability. In the business world, if someone works extra hard and gets good results, that person is usually promoted or generously compensated. The same should hold true for teachers and schools. I support legislation that would require future teachers to pass skills and general knowledge tests, reward those instructors who achieve National Board Certification, and offer incentives to school districts that demonstrate improved math and reading scores on standardized tests.

# Legislative Update

## Transportation

**W**hen I met many of you while running for office last fall, you told me that traffic congestion is at the top of your list of things you want fixed. I couldn't agree more. We spend far too much time stuck in traffic — valuable time that could be better spent with friends or family. Fortunately, it looks like things will get better. As a member of the Senate Transportation Committee, I'm pushing for local projects in Snohomish County. A few weeks ago, the Senate passed the supplemental transporta-

tion budget, which earmarks money to widen the Mukilteo Speedway (SR 525), and to build a new interchange where Highways 99 and 525 intersect. These projects will start as soon as the budget is passed by the House and signed by the Governor.

The bigger picture is that over the next five years, we have a budget of \$9 billion in state and federal funds to address Washington's transportation problems. I want to make sure every penny of that money is actually spent on transportation as it will translate to 130 projects statewide and thousands of new jobs.



One of my priority projects will be to extend HOV lanes from Northgate to Everett. We all know that traffic congestion doesn't stop at Northgate.

## Economic Development and Jobs

**I**f we play our cards right, everyone in our state can benefit from the healthy economy. But we need a strategy. My colleagues in the Senate have chosen me to coordinate a plan to promote economic development in Washington. The plan will be based on information from both the private and public sector, and will include proposals for workforce training, industrial modernization, export assistance, and tourism. Washington is the

most trade-dependent state in the nation; our economic development policies should reflect that.

Creating good-paying jobs also means training those who need new skills to compete. The Asian financial crisis has hit Boeing hard, and many people in Snohomish County have been laid off. These folks want to work but need help getting back into the job market. I've sponsored a bill to extend unemployment pay for laid-off aerospace workers who are in approved training programs. The bill will help them to get the education they need to find

a good-paying job.

In a recent hearing in the Trade and Commerce Committee, a software executive testified that the state has a shortage of computer specialists. In fact, 8,000 people will be hired from out of state this year to fill those local vacancies. That doesn't make sense when you consider the number of people in this state that need good jobs. Boeing has announced it will cut 28,000 jobs by the end of 2000. We need to find a way to train our laid off workers to help them fill those excellent high-tech jobs.



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## KEEP IN TOUCH

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**Above:** *Staying in touch with constituents is a part of the job I value greatly. Here I am addressing a group which came to Olympia to discuss issues facing seniors.*